



MEDIA RELEASE

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BUDGET CUTS TO FRONT LINE HOMELESSNESS SERVICES TARNISHES HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE SPEND

Today's Northern Territory Budget 2019-20 sets out a strong housing infrastructure program, including substantial investment in remote housing, but successful outcomes in these areas will be compromised by a reduction in funding for front line services, according to peak body for affordable housing and homelessness NT Shelter.

NT Shelter Executive Officer Peter McMillan welcomed inclusion in the budget of a range of previously announced initiatives including the Barkly Regional Deal, Better Pathway Centres, Short Stay Accommodation and John Stokes Square redevelopment.

"On the one hand, credit is given for the significant housing infrastructure investment across the Territory. However, services need to be appropriately funded to ensure that vulnerable Territorians get the supports they need to maintain stable accommodation", said Mr McMillan.

NT Shelter welcomes initiatives such as a masterplan for services utilising public housing properties as emergency women's shelters and the development of a Homelessness Strategy but maintains they needed to be properly funded in order to meaningfully tackle the disproportionate levels of homelessness in the NT.

"We have a housing crisis in the Territory and need a strategy to meaningfully tackle homelessness. With such high levels of unmet and growing demand, additional funding is sorely needed.

"Instead, as things stand, homelessness funding will not only be cut – it will be cut by three times the level of other frontline services. There is no logic to this at all and the people who will be hit by this are those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness", Mr McMillan said.

NT Shelter, the Northern Territory Council of Social Service and a number of non-government organisations have made representations to Government to express their concerns about the impact of a three per cent "efficiency dividend" on front line homelessness services. A response from Government has not yet been received.

-ENDS-

Fast Facts

9,285 clients were assisted by specialist homelessness services providers in 2017-18, representing **3%** of clients nationally. Despite this it received only **1.3%** or **\$18.8 million** of the Commonwealth's **\$1.4 billion** funding for affordable housing and homelessness in the previous year.

The level of unmet demand for homelessness services is twice that of other states, with demand for homelessness services in the NT having increased by **14%** over the past 24 months to June 2018.

The Northern Territory has **twelve** times the national rate of homelessness.

1 in 27 Territorians received specialist homelessness support during 2017-18 (per Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017-18 Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report). The national average is **1 in 85**.

NT Shelter is a not-for-profit organisation that works towards a just and fairer housing system in the NT. We aim to ensure appropriate and affordable housing is available for everyone, especially disadvantaged groups and those on low incomes.

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